

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 25840

FOL MSG SENT ACTION BANGKOK FROM SONGKHLA SEP 13 IS REPEATED
TO YOU:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA 0215

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJECT: MEETING OF SOUTHERN GOVERNORS IN HAT YAI

SUMMARY: GOVERNORS OF FOURTEEN SOUTHERN PROVINCES MET IN HAT YAI
SEPT. 10-12 TO DISCUSS CRIME SUPPRESSION, INSURGENCY, AND OTHER
TOPICS. MEETING CHAIRED BY DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER SOMBOON SIRI-
THORN. HIGHLIGHT WAS VISIT SEPT 11 OF PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT.
PREDICTABLY, EVERYBODY AGREED THAT LAWLESSNESS IN SOUTH WAS A
SERIOUS PROBLEM AND THAT STRONG MEASURES WERE NEEDED TO IMPROVE
SITUATION. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT IMPACT THIS ELABORATE PARLEY
WILL REALLY HAVE. END SUMMARY.

1. CRIME SUPPRESSION WAS THE MAJOR TOPIC AT SEPT. 10-12 MEETING OF
SOUTHERN GOVERNORS IN HAT YAI. DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER SOMBOON
SIRITHORN STRESSED NEED FOR GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN CIVILIAN,
POLICE, AND MILITARY ELEMENTS DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM. TAKING NOTE
OF THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CRIME AND OFFICIAL CORRUPTION, SOMBOON
REPORTEDLY VOWED THAT CORRUPT OFFICIALS WOULD NO LONGER BE TOLERATED.

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2. HIGHLIGHT OF MEETING WAS PARTICIPATION OF PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT SEPT. 11. IN ADDITION TO ATTENDING BRIEFINGS BY GOVERNORS AND ISOC OFFICIALS, SENI VISITED SENANRONG MILITARY CAMP IN HAT YAI FOR BRIEFING ON INSURGENCY BY LT. GEN. SAN CHITPATIMA COMMANDER OF FOURTH ARMY. NOT SURPRISINGLY, SENI MADE SEVERAL SPEECHES IN WHICH HE INDICATED HE WAS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO CRIME, OFFICIAL CORRUPTION, AND THE INSURGENTS.

3. I HAD LUNCH SEPT. 12 WITH SURAT GOVERNOR ANANT SA-NGUANNAM WHO SAID HE THOUGHT MEETING WAS USEFUL AIRING OF PROBLEMS BUT HE WAS CONCERNED THAT BOLD STATEMENTS MIGHT NOT BE FOLLOWED BY SUSTAINED INTEREST AND SUPPORT FROM BANGKOK. ANANT SAID CORRIDOR TALK DURING MEETINGS LARGELY DEVOTED TO ANNUAL ROTATION OF PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS THIS OCTOBER. ONE CONTROVERSIAL POST WILL BE CHOICE OF NEW GOVERNOR FOR NAKHON SRI THAMMARAT PROVINCE WHICH HAS HIGHEST CRIME RATE IN THE SOUTH. ANANT, A VERY CAPABLE MAN, SAID HE HAD BEEN OFFERED THE JOB AND WHILE HE PREFERS A MORE QUIET POST, THIS MAY BE AN OFFER HE CANNOT REFUSE. IT ALSO APPEARS THAT SONGKHLA GOVERNOR CHARAS SITTHIPONG, RUMORED TO BE IN LINE AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT IN BANGKOK MAY BE STAYING ON IN SONGKHLA. (WITH DUE RESPECT AND SYMPATHY FOR THE CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT, THERE ARE MANY HERE STILL HOPING HE HAS A SHOT AT THE BANGKOK JOB.

4. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE MEETING WILL AMOUNT TO MORE THAN COSMETIC REGISTRATION OF CONCERN ORCHESTRATED BY DEMOCRATS. THE PROBLEMS OF CRIME AND OFFICIAL CORRUPTION ARE INTIMATELY RELATED DOWN HERE. AS LONG AS THE RESPONSE TO DISHONEST OFFICIALS IS THE OLD SHELL GAME OF TRANSFERING THEM FROM PROVINCE TO PROVINCE, CRIME IS LIKELY TO REMAIN A MAJOR PROBLEM.

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